

Interview with Dr. Willard P. Berggren, 12 February 1986.

Allen speaking introducing Willard P. Berggren, who is Dean Emeritus of the College of Engineering. Will, when did you come to the University?

Will: Summer of 1953.

Allen: And you came as Dean at that time?

Will: No, not exactly. Engineering was technically a division of Arts and Sciences, although autonomous, and therefore I was called for three years, Director of the Division of Engineering.

Allen: Now prior to your being director, there was another man who was Director, and who was he?

Will: John Bodnar, whom I only meet briefly.

Allen: And he had been the director from the time of the founding of the division of engineering until your arrival?

Will: That's my understanding.

Allen: And three years after you came, it became a college and you became the dean. Now how long were you dean?

Will: Until 1972, so under the title Dean, it would be 16 years.

Allen: And then in 72, what did you do?

Will: I became Director of Research, and I have to remember the exact terms if I can. There was some word besides research which will come to my mind later. But it consisted of many of the things Bigsbee did before he retired.

Allen: Was that Director of Institutional Research?

Will: It didn't have institutional in it, but certainly it had many of the aspects that they use under that name.

Allen: And you were in that position until when?

Will: Until January, 1975.

Allen: At which time you retired.

Will: Yes, I took what is described as an early retirement, and I taught two years, I'll get to that later, down in Mexico..

Allen: That was the Inter American University.

Will: It was called the University of the Americas.

Allen: And Macias Rendon was the president.

Will: Not at that time. He came a few months after I did.

Allen: He is a good friend of mine. Alright. So you were here during the presidencies of Littlefield, Halsey and Manning and Miles.

Will: Correct.

Allen: You encompassed quite a period of time.

Will: I also had the good fortune to be introduced a few times to Cortright.

Allen: Oh, good, we'll talk about him. Because I need more material on him, I have quite a bit, but I need more. I have a tape of only about 20 minutes being interviewed by his son in law which is interrupted by a call to dinner and they never came back to the tape.

Someone told me that you have a particular academic distinction in that you were marked out at an early age for a study by someone who is doing careers.

Will: Yes, the man who has passed on now is Dr. Frederick Terman of Stanford University, who assembled, he didn't exactly assemble but drew on the records of about 1,000 grade school age children. Studies were conducted in terms of acceleration in the lower grades, and later in terms of careers, and Terman is passed on but it his academic heirs still get out questionnaires to various people still living.

Allen: And what was the purpose of the study?

Will: It was to find out all they could about what they called gifted children.

Allen: And what have they found out?

Will: Well they found out they are pretty much like other people and on the average, do better in terms of career, but not overwhelming themselves and that they adjust socially, are average so I suppose it is significant that they found these people are not that different from (?) in accomplishments.

Allen: Alright, why did you come to the university?

Will: I had predicted my own career in these terms. I guess things will come up about my early (?), but I was in academics at one of the branches of the University of California in a town called Bayliss and at that time, during the war period I got into very military sponsored research, and thought that after five years or so I wanted to reenter the academic world, and it all came about when after that length of time I went to Oak Ridge in Tennessee for two years

Allen: During the War.

Will: Later, 1950-53 and at that time felt that my prediction was not far off and (?) placement services of the Engineering Societies.

Allen: What attracted you to the university?

Will: This would be, I think, a very good statement on my part but I thought of it after I'd been here a few years, that it might be a very rough parallel between what I did and what people do when they adopt a child. Do you see what I mean, the university had a long, long way to go, and opportunities and I think if offers had been made from a prospering university, and from this one, I would have big trouble making a choice, but this was one that came to my attention at that time and the idea of developing it almost from scratch was interesting.

Allen: Why do you suppose the University started first a division and then the College of Engineering?

Will: I never had a whole lot of curiosity about that point, but the one thing it was a small operation, there were only three or four full time members of the faculty, and it would have seemed quite ambitious to call it the College of Engineering at that stage. Other things, I think had been debated before my arrival here. I understand indirectly that Mr. Bodnar insisted that the degree, Bachelor of Engineering, was the respectable professional thing, and that it could not be awarded until certain accreditations had been achieved, and for various reasons that I didn't feel was important to inquire about, but the one thing, it was small, it was not yet very well recognized, and I personally didn't know whether it was (?) or electrical engineering, but I think it was attached to Arts and Sciences because it kept the number of deans relatively low and you could fit around a table.

Allen: Are you aware of any requests or desire on the part of local industry to develop an engineering program?

Will: Yes, we had, and I think it may still exist, an engineering advisory Committee, which might have numbered about 15 people who were fairly influential in the industries in town and they I think have been part of the decision that this was the

time to start and engineering program. (?).

Allen: When you became first director, and then dean, what was the major problem and major objective?

Will: Far, far about everything else was professional accreditation. As you know we have had state accreditation in the legal sense, and we have New England Association for the engineering field. There was a body at that time called the Engineer's Council for Professional Development, and the accrediting they did is now done by the Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology (ABET). And when I came here various estimates were made that it would be three or four years before we had recognition of this ECPD as it was called. It took me nine years. |

Allen: Nine years, why did it take so long?

Will: They had and continue to have a very strong ideas about the number of full time faculty you have. Effective faculty members cannot be a person who works all day and then files a few hours of evening time. They didn't oppose the quality of instructions done that way, but they were rather negative toward programs that were too much based on the odd time found by people whose main job was elsewhere. That was just one point. One other, the salary, in fact about 1960 a couple of years before we finally made the accreditation, one of the people told me privately that even though we had a few very distinguished and very comparable and with doctor's degrees, that they had come to use with such modest salaries there must have been something wrong with them, so that was the kind of attitude these people had, the salary we paid, and how many degrees were held by faculty people and to a disturbingly low (?) so we had some harried times with them in 1962 .

Allen: Alright, let's back up a little bit now. You said that you had met Cortright and talked with him, tell us about Corty.

Will: I didn't say talk with him, I had the opportunity to see him in the flesh, shake hands and to learn through Henry Littlefield a number of things that had progressed so I think in a sense that I met Cortright.

Allen: Do you remember anything that he said at that time?

Will: No, I'm afraid not.

Allen: He was quite old then, wasn't he?

Will: Yes.

Allen: He was probably in his late 80's

Will: It must have been.

Allen: The president was Halsey when you came. Tell us about Jim Halsey and your working relationships with him and also the Council of Deans.

Will: I think this will be something that you know at least as much about as I, because almost anomalous administrative situation where people meeting Henry Littlefield, would learn in the first half hour that although he was called Vice President, he reported independently to the Board, and in fact had the same salary, there's no secret to that, and you know the responses we got from The New England Association, who expressed the strong hope that we would never perpetuate anything like this after they retired, so this is background for making a statement that won't surprise you, that we as Deans, had to know when to go to one office or the other and remarkably we guessed right most of the time.

Allen: Did you always get everything you wanted from Henry?

Will: Almost never.

Allen: Why not?

Will: Well, it was nearly always money, and there were a few times that I would ask for a little more than I hoped I would get and for some reason he would surprise me and give me what I asked for. But these were not common events so I think you could always, you never found Henry delaying, or sitting on an issue. (?)

Allen: There are, of course, many, many stories about Henry and money and the hiring of faculty and the like.

Will: Oh yes, one which I think you told one time was to the effect that he had interviewed a man who said he couldn't possibly come \$3200 so Henry crossed out the 3600 and put in 3200. Henry never denied it.

Allen: He did admit it to me. Most of the seemingly apochryphal stories about Henry are true in that area. Well, Henry, of course did a tremendous financial job during that time. Well, if Henry is the financial man, what's Halsey's role?

Will: He is the, I suppose visionary is not too bad a word to use. He had strong hopes and certain academic goals and certain personal goals in the sense that a student was a broad kind of person, and had broad kind of impressions, so I think, not that Henry was lacking in this, so I think if I were asked to use one word for Jim Halsey it was the aspirer.

Allen: Henry also uses that and he makes the comparison with the similarities of the Carlson Brothers. One of whom was the dreamer and one of whom was the doer, and seemed to indicate that his relationship with Jim coincided with that. The Dean's Council?

Will: The Dean's Council would sit around a table, I think there were six of us, and as I said not entirely in jest, is that we would discuss and discuss and somehow get a consensus. Although it was friendly, Henry used an iron hand with the Deans (?)

Allen: Did Halsey participate in the Council?

Will: Irregularly.

Allen: Littlefield was the constant person. Why was this?

Will: I don't know what was happening beyond my area of view, but he was probably the administrator and made the decisions, and exchanges between the deans. Jim was probably very busy with fund raising and contacts so that there are certain kind of issues I suppose Henry would control.

Allen: And of course this was further legitimized when Henry became president.

Will: Oh yes.

Allen: Coming back to Halsey a little bit, were you aware, did you hear anything about, in the Junior College Days when Halsey resigned?

Will: I heard indirectly, perhaps in a discussion with Bigsbee, that Jim had taken, or thought he had taken some other job and then returned but I knew that as hearsay.

Allen: That is actuality and that is what prompted Cortright to go out and bring in Littlefield. And he had committed himself to Littlefield before Jim came back. Which accounts, incidentally, and the circumstances for the two of these, accounts for the equal pay and equal reporting status to the Board. Let's look at some of the Deans at that time. The Dean of Education at that time was Trippensee.

Will: I have to go back for a minute (?)

Allen: Was there a Wochner there?

Will: No, Harry Becker was here when I arrived and I don't recall whether Trippensee came in right about the time I did, or a year or so later.

Allen: Tell us a little bit about Tripp.

Will: Trippensee, I never had many discussions with him except social and he seemed to be rather a (?) never made much of a study of him, but I met him mostly socially and at these meetings.

Allen: And subsequent Deans of Education. Lovell?

Will: Yes, Lovell, very earnestly did the job, but I am not one to say what was done or how well it could have been done, but one thing that surprised me a little with Lovell, he would often turn to me and say "how would you do this or do that?" and I would give him the best answer I could, but wondered why he thought I knew what it was going to be that valuable. I think Lovell was lacking, or did not think about the approach to Henry that Many of us had, and that was more or less indirect, in other words it's alright if I speak my mind, I think I might have remarked to some deans at the time, that I thought a lot of us were doomed when a new budget came along, was spend like hell when we saw how much we had (?) and Lovell didn't think that was proper or didn't ask what we were doing, he was a little behind in the process.

Allen: Curtis Ramsey?

Will: I have to stop and think who he was.

Allen: Little short fellow, who wore cowboy boots, dean of Education, succeeded Lovell. This is not unusual, most people do not remember Ramsey.

Will: The names rings a bell, but that's all.

Allen: Harold See?

Will: Oh yes, I knew the Sees of course, professionally and socially we saw the Sees.

Allen: What kind of a dean was he?

Will: As near as I could tell, a very aggressive and very effective, but near as I knew, people who were under him were some of his favorites. I liked him socially.

Allen: He sometimes is called an operator.

Will: Oh yes, I think he was more than that, to the extent that sometimes operators use the derogatory term, Near as I could tell he didn't let personal ambition disturb the decisions or efforts he made on behalf of his college.

Allen: Was he ambitious?

Will: Yes.

Allen: What did he aspire to?

Will: Well, I have to judge this by the Deans that were visible to me, and it seemed to me they considered the College of Education as each of us might, to consider his college the most important thing around and (?)

Allen: Alright, Harry Becker?

Will: I only say Harry fleetingly, because he was tapering off, in his functions here. He had just taken on his duties in Norwalk, so I only met him one or two evenings. He was slightly pompous but (?)

Allen: O.K. Earle Bigsbee?

Will: Earle tops everything else. That man was a academic statesman. The institution would prosper (?)

Allen: Anything else?

Will: He always had time to take up my problems. He was excellent at keeping out of my business if he wasn't invited. I never had any trouble. For instance he was quartered in my building and he was at my service if I needed help.

Allen: I have a tremendous high regard for Earle. Love him as an individual and for what he did for the university. Jack of all trades who filled in where needed and did a beautiful job. In everything that he did. Well, let's do Martha Jayne first.

Will: Martha was a very, very friendly girl who was very effective, I had no way to observe directly what she did in relationships with her people, except that they all seemed to love her, and she was, I think, quite useful in the Deans Council in making analysis of things even though they weren't in her direct responsibility (?)

Allen: Coming back, we saved the College of Arts and Sciences to last. Doc Ropp?

Will: I saw Doc Ropp six months ago at the house. I think he gave up his apartment and I guess both of them have had little health or accidents. I always had great respect. I think there were times when he would stand on a tiny point (?) but he certainly didn't interfere with me, because for two years I was nominally head of the division under the college. He understood

that and I understood that, that was a friction but like Bigsbee he was there to help (?)

Allen: Lee Miles as a dean?

Will: I had great personal relationship with him. He had had at Cincinnati the responsibility for the English teaching for the engineering students.) and I think that was very interesting, and we got into conversations about it. (?)

Allen: Ambitious?

Will: Yes. I heard him give a lecture, I think he was on the Keedick circuit on some campus occasion in the Student Center. He gave a talk about a good book, you can't lay it down. I met him at Henry's house the next day, I knew Henry was (?) in his mind about (?)

Allen: The two have been often referred to as competing for, first of all the academic vice presidency, See and Miles, and then subsequently the presidency. Do you have any comment on that?

Will: Well, Harold never said that to me, but I'm not surprised I had that same kind of feeling. In fact it seemed like when I think they came in the same year, it seemed like they had been brought in more or less as rivals.

Allen: Subsequently of course, Christie became vice president. His tenure was very short, did you know him at all.

Will: Yes, I remember him very well even though it was only a short time before the accident. He was very direct, he didn't delay you in responding to something, and was very understanding and always tried to help you rather than trying to fend you off, and the thing I remember most is kind of irrelevant to the history but he had the Philadelphia idiom. Usually bawdy. And I had to stop and try to translate it. They were always good and pungent, and I had to stop and figure out what he was saying, sometimes.

I went with Jim Halsey and a few others to the services for the Christies in Philadelphia and they played a tape that Christie had sent back from his tent in the jungle or wherever it was, and you could hear the strange jungle sounds on this tape, and here he was speaking from heaven, or where ever he went.

It was at the, what you might call a reception, whatever they have after the memorial service, and the Halseys were there. One car load of us went. I think Christie's secretary, and when we went to the house of some of these people, they played the tape.

Allen: I have met members of his family on a UB trip, and I just made a note to see if I can get that tape. The, after Miles left as Dean, we had a series of Deans in the Arts and Science. Mike Karnis, did you get to know him?

Will: Karnis was a very amusing and interesting guy and I know, by hearsay that he was regarded as a failure as dean, well it didn't surprise me to hear that, the only direct observation that I could make was that he would come into the deans Council and say, "I don't think my people will accept that" He seemed to be driven by them, rather than telling them. Of course I tend to be too much of an autocrat, and he was not.

Allen: Carl Larson filled in there a time or two, too.

Will: Well I could start by saying that I have great respect for him. And in fact I did as much as anyone in bringing him to this campus.

Allen: Oh, really.

Will: There was one occasion (?) in which Henry Littlefield pointed at me, I thought he was going to fire me publicly, and he said "there is a gentlemen who made a lot of money in Bridgeport who (?) and there is some money for hiring one or maybe two faculty people (?), and the other factor about that time, was that the Physics Department was struggling and trying to get an identity, and Physics meant a whole lot to Engineering. (?) and what happened was I had Carl Larson all warmed up to join the Engineering faculty, It seemed that things were so much in need direction in Physics, that I spoke with him, I guess it might have been after Ropp's time, (?) and I think they thought I was stark, raving mad to give away a professorship, but what we did, oh Lee Miles was Dean of Arts and Science, and Henry's request, spoke to Miles and said write a memo to Berggren so it is on record saying that I understand that the title of the (?) professorship would be used in case of attaching Larson to Arts and Science and I think Larson was wondering what this guy was up to. (?)

So then we asked Lee Miles and I'm sure he complied, to write a memo to me that it was the understanding of how this had come about and that the (?) professorship in general was supposed to be a part of Engineering, but in this case if we could get this man for it, there should be at least during his tenure (?)

Allen: Do we still have the full professorship in?

Will: I wondered. Now maybe it wasn't enough money to be a perpetual thing and it was at a time when there was important (?) in one or two cases where you had professors -.

Allen: Now Carl had been a Junior College president elsewhere, hadn't he?

Will: Somewhere in upstate New York.

Allen: And he got out of that because he didn't like administration.

Will: That's my understanding.

Allen: And then immediately shoved in as Dean in interim.

Will: Of course a much smaller operation, I think he really started Physics on the track.

Allen: And he still, I think he still teaches occasional course. I have always been fascinated by him and we have, we don't have a tentative date yet but he's agreed to be taped.

Will: AND one thing I am sure will come up was (?)
Carl has an interest in the physics of music.

Allen: Yes, he plays the violin or the viola? One of them.

Will: His wife had died, and since then -

Allen: Tell you another little interesting story about Carl Larson. When Cortright was looking for a man to teach Physics, he said he had made an offer to Earle Bigsbee, and if he couldn't get Earle Bigsbee, he had a back up of a Carl Larson of the University of Maine, and I have spoken on the phone with Carl who does not recall that Cortright even contacted him, but at one point, Carl almost came here although he didn't know it, but of course Bigsbee came. Alright moving on to other Deans, Don Fletcher?

He was only here for a year. The Biologist from California, who came here and kept his tenure back in California.

Will: (?)

Allen: OK, Alright. And then began a series of other people that will come back to you at another time. We have talked about Christie, obviously, Carrier became vice president in the latter part of your term, you would work with him as a Dean and then as a Director of Research. Tell us about Warren Carrier.

Will: Warren was abrasive and I could go out and have lunch with him and have an interesting time swapping yarns, and yet directly between him and me, or in my observations between me and some other persons, he seemed to delight in doing things and if there was a smooth way to do it or a bad way to do it, he would always

pick the tough way.

Allen: Why was that?

Will: I can't imagine why, but it seemed to do something for him (?) If I wanted to stand on my principle, I would say he could be insulting if he chose to be.

Allen: A rather difficult man with a very quick temper.

Will: I could add one thing that a lot of what I did over there in the (?) [Waldemere], during my time over there I'd have to, right after Bigsbee's retirement, I did a lot of statistical work, and Virginia Oberson, of course, was part of the picture, she was actually the right hand man to Carrier, and understood that the people in various departments were trying to gnaw away at what we thought the assignments had to be, and the thing that triggered all this was that Carrier, after being very brusque, might very often cave in and allow something that would amaze me.

Allen: He has been credited also with giving tenure to many people in the last years of his administration which helped to get us into problems in later years. Are you aware of that?

Will: No, except that one very strange thing happened while Carrier was here, and that was that (?) there was some case in Engineering I had recommended against tenure, and only to find that when I moved over to the new job, the tenure had been granted and I wasn't consulted except that I was still on campus (?) in another role.

Allen: Subsequently, Carrier went on to be Chancellor of one of the Units at the University of Wisconsin where he has done a very very good job. Which one?

Will: Plattville.

Allen: Plattville, yes, and I bumped into him a couple of times at meetings and had very pleasant times with him. He became, he seemed to be much more secure afterwards than he was here.

Will: Well I don't think he and Manning had unpleasantness between them, but there was sort of the lack of a real (?), and I think on successive days I could hear Carrier at lunch saying Manning was placed in a difficult position (?) and the next day take the opposite tack. (?)

Allen: Now, you worked rather closely with Manning during his administration?

Will: Well, I would say that in one respect I did, and that was that Manning personally did a proposal for some foundation for

statistical software package, these Toronto people were setting up, and Manning seemed to handled that proposal (?) And he was the administrator of that grant, but I nominally was -

Allen: Was that the system six?

Will: I have forgotten, it doesn't quite sound like the name of it but anyway it was the thing that the people in Toronto were developing, (?)

Allen: What was the purpose of the software?

Will: Well, it was to determine quickly how your expenses were going, and more important than that, to enable you to, by pushing a few buttons, to say if we wiped out the Physical Ed. requirement, What would be the primary and secondary effects of that? Naturally, it enabled you to play around with any supposed action, and get out over a period, the effect of that action.

Allen: Did you ever use that system very much?

Will: Not as much as I might have hoped, and Henneghan can be a much more accurate person to answer that. Because Henneghan, as computer director, was putting it on his machine, and I was more or less a novice at computer programming myself, but I worked in between the Toronto people. on the one hand, and Henneghan on the other hand, and they made runs, so technically they did what was said in the grant should be accomplished, but instead of that being a start of something, I stopped hearing about it and after that I was getting ready for my retirement and so I think Henneghan could give you a good story on that.

Allen: I made a note to talk with him.

Will: I would never took credit for this statement, but one time when Miles had just become president, and that was a few months before my retirement, I said something similar and said Henneghan had and he said who's Henneghan?

Allen: Tell us a little bit more about Manning.

Will: Manning was a real gentleman and I never heard him say unpleasant words and there was every reason to hope that he could have been the best damn president we ever had.

Allen: What happened?

Will: The only think I can think of is that he seemed incapable of making certain decisions, and this I have to say almost second hand because the thing I was working on was one of his loves, so perhaps giving more attention to the thing I was doing, Henneghan was doing, and somehow it didn't convert into strong actions and

so I only had this feeling, and also I was out of the country a few months after Manning was gone. I knew someone from Colorado who expressed in a circular way, wondering if he had been engaged, and said he had a reputation for having things stacked up on his desk.

Allen: Which we never found out about, -

Will: Yeah, I wonder why that wasn't found out sooner, but he was a real gentleman and he had the mind (?).

Allen: Well, I think one of the reasons was, he could never make a decision. Were you privy to circumstances regarding his, quote, firing?

Will: Yes, one day, as far as I was concerned out of the blue, although I had the feeling that certain board members were disturbed by his methods, or lack of methods, and the story seemed to be that the chairman of the board,

Allen: Silliman?

Will: Yes, Silliman, of all people, called a Dean's meeting and I hadn't see him in 20 or 30 years, and sat Manning down beside him, and sat us around the table, and said, Manning has resigned, and the things we will have to do is to see where we are going. (?)

Allen: So you had no warning of it?

Will: Only very vaguely. I had the feeling that the board or some members of it, were disturbed that the lack of, they would say that Manning, again indirectly I would learn, that they would say "Have this for us", and it wouldn't appear.

Allen: Did you know Bob Jeffries at all during this period?

Will: Yes.

Allen: What was his role?

Will: I can start with my first contact. Jim Halsey said let's go up to this friend's company in Danbury where ever it was, and we met Jeffries, as a new contributor, and

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we were getting some advice and help from Jeffries.

Allen: What was your impression of Jeffries at that time?

Will: He was a very important and eager source of encouragement, and I suppose financial encouragement as well as advisory, so it was very important to have his participation. I recall it was early, where he was assisting in fund raising, and selection of people, then at the time I moved from Engineering over to Waldemere, Jeffries had a desk over there, and he even had a laboratory over there, so I did not see him much, but, then later when we had this very tight financial pinch, at least there was the year in which it was recognized, more than Ted Manning had, he had to take more of a -, it is about the only time in my whole time, I remember a member of the board stepping in and rolling up his sleeves, which Jeffries did, so that my impressions of him were, that he was not just doing lip service, he was keeping us out of trouble and get us on an upward path.

Allen: Didn't you think it rather, well I think you said it was rather strange that a Board member

Will: It was unprecedented, but I suppose I might have thought it was fine.

Allen: Well, didn't you think it was strange also that a Board member would have an office in Waldemere?

Will: Oh sure, but he was a strange guy. I think he may have wanted to have the Physics Department provide him with his little lab, and that may have been why he was over there.

Allen: Alright, when Manning was fired, there was something called the Troika, Carrier, Diem and Cox, who ran the university.

Will: I had forgotten, but it doesn't conflict with my recollection.

Allen: Do you recall anything about that period? How did they get along individually?

Will: I don't think it made much difference to what I was seeing. Who were the people again?

Allen: Carrier, Diem the Vice President for Business, and John Cox, then Vice President for Development.

Will: I suppose I was aware that this step had been taken, but somehow it didn't affect me very much but -

Allen: And then you were here for a couple of years while Miles was here as president.

Will: Not quite that long. My departure from here was January in '75 .

Allen: So that would be about a year and a half while he was here. He came in the Fall of '74, six months. And this volume doesn't, incidentally, get into his administration. I will have an epilogue to give it more of an upbeat, the difficult times and also they say I can't be objective because I was too close to him.

Did you get to know Al Diem very well?

Will: Moderately, we were just on the same floor in Waldemere Hall, Al was a (?)

Allen: Was he an effective Business Manager, Treasurer?

Will: As near as I could tell, yes. Just about the time I was retiring, there was evidence of a very heavy quarrel between Al Diem and Henry Littlefield, and I never understood all the factors (?)

Allen: That was over this building, the Library. And it's the only time that Henry said something bad about somebody. Alright, while we're on administrators, John Cox, did you get to know him very well?

Will: Not very well.

Allen: In going through Deans, we neglected to take the Business Deans. So let's jump back in time a little bit to Eaton Read.

Will: I knew him fairly well, and he was both a contributor to the Deans Council, not only in matters of real substance but in matters of Latin. I suppose that if I was asked what is my one strong impression that I have of Eaton Read, it is his use of Latin and his ability to reach for something in Latin to describe what ever we were in at that moment. I don't know if it is fair for me to say this, but I would wonder a little if it might have been just a little bit superficial (?). He got along with the Deans. He was a good contributor to Dean's meetings.

Allen: Fred Ekeblad?

Will: Fred again seemed to be a very effective person, and I can't say there was anything notable plus or minus, again socially I knew him. Certainly I'm on the plus side of neutral about him.

Allen: Frank DiLeo?

Will: There were long years that I hardly knew him except as a name on paper, and then I became a member, by Manning's choice, as a first administrative committee for labor negotiations, and

he was on that. And I learned to appreciate him there. He was certainly not selfish.

Allen: So much so that it contributed to his untimely demise. I remember being told by Dr. Miles to go over and talk with him, trying to get him to take a vacation, just before he died, and he was adamant about it. He said "I can't", and I tried to say, you're not indispensable and as it turned out, shortly after that, he died.

Frank DiLeo was a member of a Senate Committee that made a study of our finances and reported to the Senate, do you recall that? Frank, in that committee and a subsequent report, identified some of our major problems which, had we taken action during that time, would have saved us a lot of grief later on. Unfortunately, we didn't. Now, as a dean, you were a member of the Senate, which I had a little bit to do with, but whatever your reflections are going to be, don't let that bother you, because I have some bad reactions about it too. What was your reaction to and recollection of the Senate?

Will: Well in the early years I thought it was a debating society, and that this seemed to arise out of the, in many ways the iron fisted administration by Henry. and in later years it seemed to swing perhaps a little farther than necessary as the voice of the people, and I guess my contacts with the Senate were only suspended when I was no longer dean of Engineering, but I would think it swung a long way.

Allen: Yes, I agree with you. One thing I have in my notes that we haven't talked about, it seems to me that I kept hearing about all kinds of conflicts with the Industrial Design program.

Will: Redmann and I got along, I think, in an excellent manner, but Engineering faculty as distinguished from I.D., perhaps not only didn't understand it, but didn't want to understand it, and no one ever said this to me, but I had the feeling that a lot of the engineering faculty wondered how we got that mixed up with the engineering courses. There were two or three times, over a period of years that Redmann and I would look at the problem, where they should be attached and there may be memos somewhere about it but I expressed to Redmann many times the wish that it was an important program, and it would do better attached to some other part of the university, I would support that. Usually I would be the one raising the point, rather than Redmann raising it, indicating that he was unhappy, so I am not sure what you mean by what words you use when we got to I.D.

Allen: I've forgotten myself. Antagonisms?

Will: It may have been feelings. People may have hesitated to bring to me, it may have been feelings, as I said by the en-

gineers on the faculty about I.D. being attached to, perhaps even the amount of attention I was giving them, but I thought it was a strong program and it was, and I wanted it to make a name for the university and if it could make that name better under some other administrative structure, that was fine. So I suppose I have to say that my main contact with ID was that. He and I, as far as I understood it, understood each other well, and (?)

Allen: Are there any other engineering faculty that you particularly recall?

Will: George Botosani. The reason he comes to mind was that I could never get him to stop smoking in the hallway, but anyway when they would have a department meeting for mechanical engineering, they would have to practically jump on George's shoulders to get him to shut up, nobody else could talk, but I'm sure you didn't mean, of course. Charlie Kishibay I think was kind of strong member of the faculty, I guess he is on the retired list now, and my first job when I came to Bridgeport was to make friends with him, because you could almost describe him as a disgruntled, and the reason he had some contact with student BEI affiliation, and I was more or less asked by Jim Halsey to try to repair this state, and I did manage to make friends with Charles. (?)

Allen: I want to talk about that. I don't know much about it but this abortive union with BEI. What was this about?

Will: It was a few years before I came, and Bigsbee would be the one who knows a lot about it. But what I hear through Bigsbee and perhaps others, was that Keating understood or claimed he understood the agreement between UB as being that BEI would be in charge of all evening instruction and it kind of foundered on that point.

Allen: Yes, I remember that, now were there any other possible mergers or merging talk? During your period?

Will: Just faint ones. Even as late as, about 1970, I saw Keating fairly often and he would use clerical words like, maybe we should discuss relationships, and I would go to Henry and Henry would be pretty negative, (?) I think BEI didn't want to lose their identity.

Allen: I have also heard, and I haven't been able to tie this down on one of them, that our faculty was apposed to it too.

Will: The members of the engineering faculty never said much to me about it, but this doesn't surprise me, and I could see that the university in general might have felt that it would be no asset.

Allen: Why?

Will: Well, I think they may have felt that they were losing some of the leading elements, however they are a very small industrialists in Bridgeport who came up through BEI, and Mr. Paul who now heads Sikorsky had some previous enrollment before getting his degree here. So I always had a feeling that it was too bad that I could see BEI didn't want to lose their identity, we didn't want to lose ours and (?) So the thing foundered and I was always vaguely sorry that we couldn't really see a way to work this out.

Allen: Would you say that a part of this might be that they were a technology area whereas the engineers here were into science areas?

Will: I don't think so, they claim and still claim that they are real engineering, and not technology, in terms of the unwashed aspects.

Allen: Their first accreditation was as a technical school.

Will: How far back was that?

Allen: I have the dates, but I don't recall.

Will: Was it before my time?

Allen: I think so, yes.

Will: I know they call themselves an evening college and were very prickly about any distinction between the values.(?)

Allen: The first large numbers of foreign students came to the engineering college.

Will: Yes, this was after I moved over.

Allen: Do you know anything about that?

Will: Very little. I guess it helped to develop the college in terms of strength of hiring (?). During most of my time, I was in Waldemere Hall, and numbers would come to me from Engineering were 5 and 6 in certain classes, which were very embarrassing. So in terms of numerical and financial development, I suppose it was a good thing, but there have been a hodge-podge of students whose English was poor and whose cheating was high and (?)

Allen: Who were the faculty members who were largely responsible for this?

Will: For the increase?

Allen: Yes.

Will: Again I knew it from a distance and one of our EE professors, Ghaznavi is a Persian, and went over there and I think Fitchen went over there, and I guess that's where they got a lot of our students but I can only speak from a distance on that.

Allen: Another professor who had a role in this was Hassan Zandy. He was in Physics. Did you know him at all?

Will: Sure, he was housed in the Engineering building until Dana Hall developed, and yes, I knew him. There was one year before he had brought his family in from Persia, he went over there in the summer, and got held up in one of these political reasons or what kind of reasons, and Bigsbee and I were teaching Physics while Zandy was trying to get back here. That was in the middle 50's. Did you know about that?

Allen: I'm not aware of that.

Will: Well it might have been late 50's, but anyhow I was certainly (?)

Allen: Wasn't there a question about his degree?

Will: I don't think there's any question it might have been falsified, it might have been somebody in that college over there in Teheran, who said, oh, he's a good fellow let's write him a diploma. But I don't think Zandy tried to falsify.

Allen: More of the question of the quality of the degree. What do you think, from this distance, what was your greatest success at the university?

Will: Well, the thing that haunted me day and night, was getting accredited, and that took from 1962, and I suppose I would lay claim to smoothing relations here and there, and trying to develop a family with faculty, this was a controversial point, but I guess the thing that flashes in my mind is that I took Engineering and raised it from a pup. That is all that I can claim.

Allen: That's a considerable accomplishment. What were your greatest failures at the university?

Will: One of the mistakes that haunted me when I was shaving a couple of days ago, was that I did something rather careless in terms of PR, and it may have been more of the times I didn't recognize. I was answering laboratory developments, inviting industrial people over, and here they came, and I had posters and a

laboratory here and there, and I hadn't done the obvious things. I hadn't asked students posted with badges and sign in here, so we would know who had been there, and Frank Wright was with the university at that time, and had didn't say anything to me until I confessed it and said I should have had you over here last week. People would walk in and what they were supposed to see or why they'd been invited, and probably went thinking less of us then when they arrived. So there may have been other events like that that I didn't recognize, but i guess (?)

Allen: What was the funniest thing that ever happened to you at the University?

Will: Maybe I can come up it as we talk. I know there have been some, I will have to think about it.

Allen: We are along towards the end of this session as far as my questions go. If at any time you think of any of these, make some notes or give me a call, because one thing that I want to do is to make this as human a history as possible, and a lot of funny things I know have happened, but I have difficulty in remembering them myself.

Will: I will make notes and will send them to you or call you.

Allen: OK, Fine.

If you had it to do all over again, would you do it?

Will: Yes.

Allen: Why?

Will: I think I kind of seeped into my consciousness while I was here, that I didn't want to be in too big a puddle, like the University of California at Berkeley, my alma mater. I might have had 200 on the engineering faculty, and not for self prominence but a more of a family feeling, so size was one concept and development from scratch, so there's nothing I had to pull down to change. When you build something, you didn't have to tear anything apart first.

Allen: What impressed you the most about the university? Particularly in the early days.

Will: You mean when I came? Well, again, the family quality of it. Your phone extension number is 12 for instance. The family quality of it, you could know everybody, not only in your own area. I can remember being out here when ground was broken for the Carlson Library, and when private homes were (?) so the impression, I think, was something that building almost from scratch.

Allen: And this is something that I get an awful lot of comments about. The feeling that, one, we were a family, and two, that we were building, and in many instances we took less than we thought we ought to have, with the idea that the reward would come later. Sometimes, never at all. But in some instances, it did. What about our students during this time? What was the quality of the student?

Will: There was quite a wide range in quality. I think we didn't have extremely high admission standards, but in engineering we had to remedy these conditions, so it might have meant that we started from a lower plane with beginning classes and so on. We began turning out people (?) And maybe a little foreshadowing of the slogan now, The Real World, did apply here, and the employers of engineers in Bridgeport, during the 60s, found the people from here, ready to roll up their sleeves and do the kind of job they wanted done. And weren't too fussy about what they would call a professional level job. In fact some of the employers would be a little too much that way. One of the Edward Bullards, the third, I guess it was, would say, "Why don't you turn out more bafflers who were willing to be on the baffling board for about three years?" You know how that is now, you wouldn't even say that.

I forgot what your question was.

Allen: We were talking about the quality of the students. The next question was are there any students who have done well that come particularly to mind?

Will: Mr. Paul, whom I didn't know very much directly, but he certainly got to the top of Sikorsky and BEI, I think. had more people because they started in 1924. Names escape me sometimes but, our first masters degrees were given to some people, mostly from AVCO Lycoming, who are now, I think, very prominent over there.(?) our first 5 or 6 masters degrees all because of part time studies.

Allen: Interestingly enough, it was the people from AVCO who were putting most pressure on us in the early days of the university to start an engineering school. And they made some contributions in this area, not only monetarily but advice. They were very active. Now subsequently, of course, we got a very high percentage of UB graduates at Sikorsky. How do you account for the fact that we do not have a school of aeronautical engineering and yet Sikorsky employs a very large number of our engineers?

Will: I think the people who do the hiring at Sikorsky, perhaps, like a lot of the engineering executives around the country, in

that they don't care that much about labels, what we would call mechanical engineering graduate would be somebody else's aeronautical engineering graduate, the differences are not that great and I think that the first two people that they hired had the stuff they wanted, that was good enough for them. I have always been a little bit conservative about titles of options in engineering, we have quite a time and slice it kind of thin. And the other point is that at the BS level it is even less important (?)

Allen: Now you alluded to this at the beginning of the interview, your educational background was what?

Will: Bachelor of Science in EE at the University of California, Berkeley, 1931, and Masters in Mechanical in '32. They had two commencements a year, so when I say '32, I mean fall '33, and similarly, the doctorate was completed in '34, but awarded in 1935. So those were the various degrees.

Allen: I have that problem with my undergraduate degree from Yale. It was during the war, I was the class of '43 but they accelerated us during the war and I graduated in December '42. Be we are the class of '43. And that bothers people considerably, The Who's Who people were bothered by that, Class of '43, graduated December '42. They couldn't figure that one out. Done probably by people who didn't, who had forgotten about the war.

What did you do at Oak Ridge?

Will: I was, I suppose you would say largely an administrator, although there were no sharp lines which divided the administrative and the working stiffs. And I don't know how broad this is true, but the unit I was with in Oak Ridge, didn't have a lot of organization. We had a a lot of meetings, they were productive meetings. so that when I went there, well, I have to back up a little bit, the units at Oak Ridge are mostly operated by companies, for instance (?) was our employer, and was picked up by what was then the Atomic Energy Commission, and I suppose partly on account of this close affiliation with the government, we had titles that sounded like Civil Service titles. Ad my title was Chief Research Engineer, but that didn't mean that my reporting had to do with (?).

And I was called, at least after about 6 months being there, Special Assistant to the Research Director who was (?). And things would come up like developing a school on the premises, And also writing up the reports (?)

Allen: Well is there anything else that you would like to add that I haven't asked you?

Will: There will probably be a dozen things I will think of when

I get home.

Allen: That often happens and if you could jot them down and send me a note or give me a call on this, it would be greatly appreciated. One of the things about reminiscing, is that it starts you thinking in this area and then things start to flood back afterwards.

Will: Particularly the funny things that (?)

Allen: Especially the funny things. Because that I want to include as well. It makes it humorous. I don't want this to be as dry as dust.

Will: Do you have a publisher lined up for this?

Allen: I am going to, before we talk about that, I am going to thank you very much and close off this tape.

END OF TAPE.

As an after thought. Berggren remembered the following:

"Two or three times he got calls from Board Members asking: 'Do you know a good engineering college where I can send my son?'"

A Grim Story.

End of Transcript.